

Northeast Florida Chapter
Community Associations Institute

The Community Connection

*Year of the
Dragon*

Also...

Meet Our New President

Celebrate Black History Month





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Villages of Vilano Homeowners Association

Chapter Executive Director - Jason Bee

NEFLCAI

NEFLCAI provides education, networking, resources, and advocacy for Community Associations in Northeast Florida and the professionals who serve them.

UPCOMING EVENTS

February 27th - Top Golf Social

**March 20th - Monthly Program
Maggiano's Little Italy 11:30 a.m.**

**April 10th - Monthly Program
Maggiano's Little Italy 11:30 a.m.**

**May 8th - Monthly Program
Maggiano's Little Italy 11:30 a.m.**

**June 21 - NEFL CAI EXPO
"Propertyopoly"**

2024 COMMITTEES

Communications

Zenzi Rogers - Board Liaison

Brooke Hassan - Co-Chair

Tara Tallaksen - Co-Chair

LAC (Legislative Action Committee)

David Bonewell - Board Liaison

Robyn Severs, Esq. - Co-Chair

Pilar Dixon - Co-Chair

Membership

Alanda Williams - Board Liaison

Pilar Dixon - Chair

Programs

Jesse Martinez-Skinner - Board Liaison

Ed Ronsman - Chair

Social

Leslie Pragasam - Board Liaison

Amy Newhouse - Chair

EXPO

Kate McAdams - Board Liaison

Brian Davis - Chair

GALA

Steven Sheremeta - Board Liaison

Stacy Montoya - Co-Chair

Joshua Donlon - Co-Chair

If you're interested in being on a committee for 2024, we'd love to have you.

Please reach out to our Executive Director, Jason Bee to get connected.

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JUNE 21, 2024



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Meet Our New President:

Bringing Lagniappe and Sunshine to the Northeast Florida Chapter

Dear Members,

Allow me to introduce myself: I am Zenzi Rogers, your neighborhood enthusiast for all things community association related. I was born and raised in Michigan - Go Blue! However, my family hails from New Orleans, so I spent many summers and holidays basking in the Creole culture - Laissez les bon temps rouler! I have been a licensed community association manager and manage community associations for a National builder for over 17 years. I proudly serve as an officer in the United States Army Reserves and am blessed with two beautiful children.

Now, you might wonder, "Why on earth would you take on such a responsibility?" Well, it's quite simple: I firmly believe that education, laughter, camaraderie, and a touch of mischief can transform even the most difficult



conversations, decisions and dynamics into memorable moments of connection and collaboration. That is what we, as managers and volunteer leaders, must do every day. Purchasing a home is the American dream, and community is what connects us. I truly enjoy educating and assisting homeowners during the pursuit of their dreams.

But let's not kid ourselves: leading an association is no walk in the park (although, I do enjoy a good stroll on the beach). It requires dedication, tough skin, empathy, a keen eye for detail, and the ability to navigate emotions, personalities, documents, contracts, owners and vendors. This is where Community Association Institute comes in. We are here to help navigate, educate, support and assist in this often times crazy and frustrating rollercoaster of a ride that we have all elected to hop on.



My vision for our chapter this year is:

- 1) To increase manager and volunteer leader participation so that we can provide additional support and mentorship that is truly needed in our industry as we see the retirement of many of our seasoned managers.
- 2) Offer dynamic programming and social events that assist managers and leaders in their day to day responsibilities. Knowledge is power. The more we know, the more we grow.
- 3) To have fun!!!! This is not an easy job. It is often thankless and stressful. We all need a safe place to relax and release amongst like minded colleagues who can relate and assist us in our responsibilities while letting us know that we are not alone on our journeys.



So, buckle up, because we're about to embark on a wild ride filled with laughter, camaraderie, and maybe (hopefully) even develop some life long connections. Together, we'll take our chapter to new heights and ensure that the Northeast Florida Chapter of Community Association Institute is not just an organization but a family.

In closing, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude for entrusting me with this role. Let's support each other, grow together and have a great time in the process.

Sincerely,

Zenzi Rogers
President
Northeast Florida Chapter
Community Association Institute



meet the
2024
NEFL CAI
Board of Directors



Zenzi Rogers
Lennar
 President
 Liaison to the
 Communications Committee



Kate McAdams
Performance Painting
 President Elect
 Liaison to the EXPO
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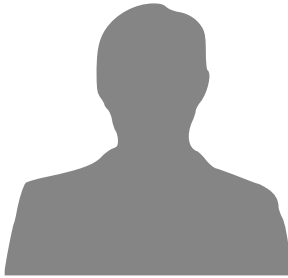
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Manin Construction
 Treasurer
 Liaison to the Membership
 Committee



Jesse Martinez-Skinner
Associa CMC Jacksonville
 Director
 Liaison to the Programs
 Committee



Leslie Pragasam
First Coast Mulch
 Director/Past President
 Liaison to the Social
 Committee



Steven Sheremeta
May Management
 Director
 Liaison to the Gala
 Committees



David Bonewell
Villages of Vilano
 Director
 Liaison to the Legislative
 Action Committee

meet Our New
 Executive Director:

Jason Bee



With a background rooted in service and dedication, Jason served years on active duty in the Navy Seabees before transitioning to the nonprofit sector. His passion for helping others led him to work closely with homeless veterans, providing essential support and resources to those in need.

A few years ago, Jason moved to the community association field, where he now enjoys his role, dedicated to serving and supporting members to ensure their needs are met. With a solid commitment to excellence and a heart for service, Jason Bee continues to impact his community positively and beyond.

2024

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Co-Chair
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Co-Chair
Vesta Property Services

Brian Davis
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- **Sheryl Koziarski**, Fiddler's Hammock HOA

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Three Job Titles That Our Growth Has Created



Over the past decade, large-scale commercial landscape companies, Yellowstone Landscape included, have experienced tremendous growth in every measurable way. For us, growth is a core component of our business and something we're not shy about sharing with our clients, prospective clients, and perhaps most importantly, with our new employees.

In our last post, we wrote about how our growth benefits our clients. In this post, we'd like to tell you about three job titles that our growth has made necessary, and how the individuals in these roles impact our business.

First, we think it's important to mention here at the beginning of this discussion that just because we're choosing to highlight these three support roles, this post is in no way meant to understate the critical positions that are most visible in our company. The members of our frontline service crews who perform the hard work and keep our clients' properties looking their best are irreplaceable. They are the foundation of any thriving landscape or snow and ice management operation, regardless of the company's size.

But, with each stage of growth, new challenges and opportunities arise for us to look beyond the standard scope of services that we provide for our clients. We've created new support positions - some to directly solve specific challenges we've faced along the way, others started with a specific goal in mind, but evolved into something so much more than we originally thought. Now, these roles have become essential parts of our daily operations, and we can't imagine life without these dedicated, specialized Yellowstone Landscape Professionals among our ranks.



Financial Analyst

One of the earliest “non-traditional” landscape industry job titles that we started recruiting for was Financial Analyst. Ten years ago, it was considered strange for a landscaping company to be seeking out Financial Analysts. In many landscape companies, the financial matters of the business are the sole responsibility and concern of the owner, often relying on the counsel of an outside accounting firm or a small number of close business associates. Even within our company, there was a time when branch and operations managers were solely responsible for getting the work done and caring for the customer because it wasn’t easy to share relevant financial performance data with all levels of management within the company.

When we began pairing up our regional and branch leaders with dedicated Financial Analysts, we instantly became better equipped to make timely decisions that materially impact the health of our business and improve our effectiveness in serving our clients. Having the insight and understanding that these analysts provide allows us to have greater confidence in how we manage the significant financial investments and the trust that our clients place in us. By understanding our costs and how larger economic forces impact them, we can have open and honest discussions with our employees and clients about the health of our business, and ensure that we’re setting ourselves up for long-term, sustainable growth. Our financial analysts are tasked with so many important business processes today, that it’s hard for us to imagine not having them to call on when we need help understanding all the finer details. Their work is a massive part of our company’s tremendous growth story.



We've written before about how technology is changing the game for large-scale commercial landscapers, so maybe it isn't a surprise that all this new technology requires an extensive support structure to make sure it all runs smoothly. For us, Technology Support is more than a single individual or two that are "good with computers". The Technology Support we have at Yellowstone is second to none. Helpdesk technicians, network and security experts, business intelligence analysts, software support, and special teams evaluating new operational technology in the field - they're all part of a responsive and knowledgeable support infrastructure dedicated to making sure that all

Technology Support

call the systems and devices we rely on are operating as intend and kept secure.

As an example, as we grew, we soon adapted to completely paperless processes for both our field operations and our back office functions. First, it makes us more efficient and we can more quickly respond to the needs of our employees and our customers. And two, it's another example of how large companies can do more to be environmentally responsible, by reducing the amount of paper waste that we generate.

But to power all our automation and electronic organization, we need our tablets and smartphones, our in-truck GPS units, our servers, our communication platforms, our scheduling software, and our accounting software to constantly communicate, share, and process all the information we collect. That takes a talented and dedicated team of Technology Support pros, and there is no way that we'd be where we are today without them.



About the Author

Joseph Barnes has served as Marketing Manager of Yellowstone Landscape since 2013. He writes on a variety of topics related to the commercial landscaping industry.



Frontline Recruiting Specialist

It's no secret that our frontline service crews are both the most visible and valuable resource for any commercial landscaping and snow management company. The results that these hardworking men and women create for our clients are why we're able to both keep and to expand our client partnerships. Especially over the past few years, we've increased our efforts to reward and retain our best employees, and that's something that we'll never stop doing.

But as we grow and expand, serving new clients and moving into new areas of the country, the need to find experienced, reliable workers often outpaces our current employees' ability to recruit and bring new talent into our organization. That's where our Frontline Recruiting Specialist comes in.

The role of the Frontline Recruiter in our company is a truly unique specialty, but their position and purpose are often misunderstood. First, the positions that they recruit for include our service team members, supervisors, and even some of our technical specialist positions. While some of what they do involves recruiting through traditional means, (like social media and online job boards), our Frontline Recruiters are also charged with finding new and innovative ways for our company to connect and support the neighborhoods where our existing service team members live. As ambassadors for our company in local communities, they help our existing employees spread the word about career paths available in our company and in our industry.

Yes, we want to find the best employees at every level of our organization. But we've learned that the best people to bring into our company come with a strong referral from a current or past employee who has already proven themselves. Great team members not only want to do great work, but they also

want to build a reliable team around themselves Our Frontline Recruiters are in our branches, and in our local communities, helping us find ways to give back to the team members and to causes that impact their neighborhoods.

So if you ever find yourself scrolling through our [Career Opportunities](#), you're likely to see one of these job titles, or maybe even a few others that might give you pause and have you asking, "Why would a landscaping company be hiring for that position?"

But remember that we're proud of all the different types of people and the different skills they bring to our table. If our growth has taught us anything, it's that we will always need to find creative problem solvers and people who are willing to step in and help us overcome any new challenge that presents itself in the future.

And if you're looking for a commercial landscaping partner with all the resources you'll ever need to keep your property looking its best, please [contact us today](#).



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February is American Heart Month!



Building a Healthier Community:

Strategies for Fostering Healthy Habits in Homeowners Associations

Homeowners Associations play a pivotal role in shaping the community's atmosphere and residents' quality of life. As community leaders, it's essential for HOAs to not only focus on property management but also actively promote and support healthy habits among residents. Cultivating a healthier community involves fostering an environment that encourages physical, mental, and social well-being. Here are several strategies for HOAs to create and sustain healthy habits among homeowners:

1. Community Spaces and Amenities:

- Designate areas for physical activities such as walking paths, parks, or fitness centers within the community.
- Encourage the use of communal spaces for group exercises, yoga classes, or sports activities.

- Regularly maintain and upgrade amenities to keep them attractive and accessible.

2. Educational Workshops:

- Organize workshops on healthy living, nutrition, and mental well-being.
- Invite professionals to provide insights on maintaining a healthy lifestyle.
- Distribute informative materials or newsletters to keep residents informed about health-related topics.

3. Community Gardens:

- Allocate space for community gardens, promoting sustainable living and providing residents with fresh produce.
- Organize gardening workshops to educate homeowners about the benefits of growing their own food.

- Foster a sense of community by encouraging shared responsibilities for maintaining the gardens.

4. Social Events:

- Plan social events that focus on health and wellness, such as fitness challenges, health fairs, or group walks.
- Create social groups centered around common health interests, like running clubs or healthy cooking classes.
- Support and promote local health-related events in collaboration with neighboring communities.

5. Policy Support:

- Implement policies that promote a healthy environment, such as smoke-free zones and restrictions on harmful substances.
- Encourage pet-friendly policies to promote outdoor activities like walking or jogging with pets.

- Advocate for policies that enhance safety and security, ensuring residents feel comfortable engaging in outdoor activities.

Homeowners Associations play a crucial role in shaping the lifestyle and well-being of residents. By implementing these strategies, HOAs can actively contribute to creating a healthier and more vibrant community. Fostering healthy habits not only enhances the overall quality of life but also strengthens the sense of community and shared responsibility among homeowners. Through a collective effort, HOAs can pave the way for a more resilient and flourishing living environment.

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Looking Ahead In 2024: 'The Year of the Dragon'

2024 is the Year of the Wood Dragon, beginning on February 10th, 2024 (Chinese New Year) and concluding on January 28th, 2025 (Chinese New Year's Eve).

In Chinese culture, the Dragon holds a significant place as an auspicious and extraordinary creature, unparalleled in talent and excellence. It symbolizes power, nobility, honor, luck, and success. 2024 is forecasted to bring about opportunities, changes, and challenges. If you're seeking a shift in your current lives, this year might offer a favorable chance.

OPPORTUNITIES: NEFLCAI offers plenty of opportunities for you to participate, learn, network, and HAVE FUN! Check out how to GET INVOLVED today!

CHANGES: Did you know that we offer a Job Posting area on our website? If you are looking for a change this year, check out the Open Positions today!

CHALLENGES: As many of us learned this month, new policies will be bringing our industry quite a few challenges in 2024. Keep informed by using CAI's Legislative and Policy Tracking Map!



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CAI's Commitment to Black History Month and the Pursuit of Housing Equality

by **Hannah Engber**, Manager, Government & Public Affairs

February is a celebration of resilience, progress, and the rich tapestry of Black history. At CAI, we embrace this opportunity to reflect on our commitment to equality, especially in the realm of housing.

The journey toward fair and equitable housing for all Americans is marked by significant milestones, but challenges persist. In the 1960s, while Congress addressed discrimination in public accommodations through the Civil Rights Act of 1964, housing discrimination remained a pressing issue, segregating Black Americans into low-income areas with subpar housing conditions.

President Joe Biden's Executive Order 13988, signed on January 20, 2021, expanded civil rights by combating discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation. This underscores the principle that every person deserves respect and dignity, regardless of who they are or whom they love.

CAI stands firm in its support of the Fair Housing Act, advocating for equal housing opportunities irrespective of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Our dedication extends to pursuing state legislation that simplifies the process for community associations to amend discriminatory covenants, aligning with the evolving landscape of inclusivity.

Recognizing the ongoing battle against discrimination, CAI urges community associations to adopt behaviors that eliminate bias and inequality. Education is key, empowering individuals to shape minds and refine character, serving as beacons of equality in their communities. The [CAI Civility Pledge](#) outlines these essential behaviors, providing a roadmap to foster inclusivity.

As we celebrate Black History Month, CAI acknowledges the progress made in the community association housing industry over the last half-century.

Twenty-two states have taken steps to help associations with the simplified removal of discriminatory covenants, and in 2024, there are 15 more states introduced legislation for a simplified removal process of these covenants. CAI supports nationwide legislative language that streamlines the process for association boards to amend discriminatory covenants, reinforcing our commitment to equality.

Arizona, Nebraska, Washington, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia introduced language drafted in July 2023 by the Uniform Law Commission for the simplified removal of discriminatory covenants in land records.

CAI supports the adoption of uniform legislative language like this and has made efforts over the past several years to support the process of simplified removal of discriminatory covenants, including creating model legislative language and a public policy in 2020.

CAI's public policy backs legislation that enables the removal of outdated, illegal, and unenforceable covenant restrictions considered discriminatory under federal Fair Housing Act or state anti-discrimination laws. CAI supports a streamlined process for the governing board of a community association to remove such restrictions. Additionally, CAI supports legislation requiring the removal of discriminatory restrictions upon receiving a petition from an individual owner addressed to the governing board or a court.

Black History Month serves as a reminder of the strides we've made and the work ahead. CAI is dedicated to fostering diverse, equitable, and inclusive communities, ensuring that the legacy of equality continues to thrive.

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How To Stay On Your Toes When You're Deposed

by Attorney Dave Milton

You're a board member or a community association manager, and, after months or even years of effort, your association is running smoothly: your meetings are efficient, and your vendors are reasonably priced and performing well. And then, out of nowhere and to everyone's dismay, your association ends up involved in a lawsuit.

You don't want to sit for a deposition, but despite your association's attorney's best efforts, your deposition has been scheduled and you've received a formal notice of deposition.

*Sitting for a deposition can be intimidating; at the very least, it's anxiety-producing. These few tips can help you alleviate some of that anxiety.

First, speak with your association's attorney to discuss the issues that are likely to come up in your deposition, and then review any relevant documents. Preparation is essential.

In addition to preparation, here are three general principles that can help your deposition to be as painless as possible.

#1- Tell The Truth

This is the first and most important pointer. The truth can be hard because it might seem like the truth will hurt the association, but the truth will keep you out of trouble, and good attorneys can (like Tom Cruise in *A Few Good Men*) handle the truth.

There are a few statements that, at first blush, might not look like the truth but that, in fact, be true truth: a) I don't know, and b) I can't remember. If either of those statements is true, don't be afraid to make them – and stick to them, especially when the attorney asking the questions tries to make you feel dumb or ill-informed for not knowing or not remembering.

#2- Don't Try To Be An Expert

One of the ways some lawyers try to trick witnesses is to ask questions that require expertise to answer. For example, they'll ask detailed questions about construction defects. Although you could say you saw stucco cracks or heard other people mention cracks, you don't have the evidence or expertise to explain why the stucco cracks exist or what damage (existing and future) the stucco cracks are causing. Let the experts offer their expert opinions; you can do this by saying you're deferring to the association's expert(s).

Another trick some lawyers will employ is to ask – in a roundabout way – for an interpretation of a legal document like a contract or an association’s governing documents. While you might recognize a contract or the association’s governing documents (facts you can acknowledge, if true), it may constitute the unlicensed practice of law to interpret those documents. If a question feels like it would require a legal interpretation, you can respond by saying that you can’t provide a legal interpretation and will defer to the association’s attorney for any interpretations.

#3- Do Your Best

Nobody – not even experts who are involved in lawsuits regularly – gets everything right all the time. Some attorneys will try to intimidate you into speculating or changing your answer but don’t get rattled. If you do give an answer that requires clarification, your association’s attorney will have the chance to ask questions to get that clarification. Just do your best.

Serving on an association’s board or as its manager is a hard, and often thankless job, but your association will be better off because of your effort.

*If you’ve been designated as a corporate representative, you’ll need to do some additional homework to get prepared. I’ll write another article on that for another issue.

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